GT 3/16/04

Dobson wants to mix church and state

James Dobson tells the National Association of Evangelicals to press for a constitutional amendment outlawing same-sex marriages because, he says, such marriages constitute a moral issue, not a political one; because "Western civilization hangs on this issue"; because the implications of same-sex marriage are "awesome" and will "rip the family to shreds" ("Dobson out to quell gay unions," Metro, March 13).

This kind of hyperbole about defining marriage is a poor substitute for intelligent discourse. The only "awesome" implication is that this excess in rhetoric could trigger an extremist fix that unravels long-held freedoms. This overwrought push for a constitutional amendment to define marriage is doubly ironic because it puts conservatives in the position of imposing government into private lives, and it puts religious operatives such as Dobson in the position of imperiling religious liberty. We would do better to forgo the histrionics and pay heed to history.

Let's remember the Constitution is a secular document guaranteeing rights and freedoms. It is not and never should be an instrument for encoding the kind of selective morality Dobson claims is at stake here. In America, we have a defining separation of church and state matters whose purpose is to hold theocratic tendencies at bay.

Dobson and any who would be whipped into his frenzy would do well to calm down long enough to give a more sober reflection not only to what they feel obsessed to "save," if indeed marriage is even in need of such, but also to what they might destroy in the process.

Ken Burrows
Woodland Park

Proposal would keep men in charge of the family

As a Christian minister, I take exception to James Dobson's attack on the marriage of homosexual persons, and, by inference, upon homosexual persons as either unrepentant sinners or as deficient human beings.

I have long contended that Focus on the Family is insufficiently named. It should be called Focus on the Patriarchal Family. Dobson prefers to call it the "traditional" family, but to use the word "patriarchal" is more specific and more accurate. Those who believe that women must defer to men are large in number as witnessed by the practices of evangelical Christians, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians, Jews and Muslims. Women, with few exceptions, are subject to men in these religious bodies, and are not admitted to offices of genuine authority.

The purpose of patriarchy, in any variation, in any religion, and throughout history, is to give power and authority to men, and to render women as powerless and as silent as possible.

The heterosexual male need to be in charge knows no bounds. That tradition, among Christians, was rescinded in Jesus' death and resurrection. St. Paul insists, in his letter to the Galatians, that "in Christ there is neither male nor female."

Dobson's objections to homosexual unions is based upon his belief that only marriages where a man dominates a woman fulfills the purpose of the ancient patriarchal system to keep women in their place. The current disagreement in matters of gender and sex have more to do with who shall be in charge of the world than with who may be married to whom.

Rev. Robert G. Hewitt
Colorado Springs

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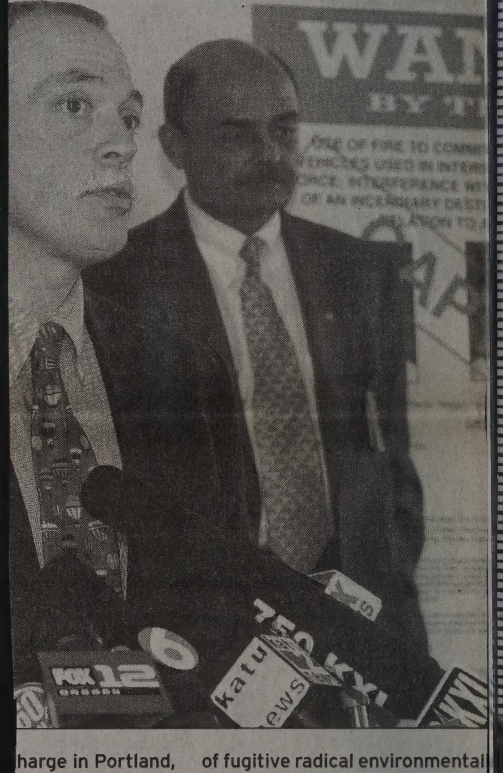

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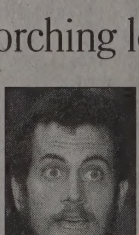

SCARPETTI: Caught while shoplifting.

friend's father is a deputy state fire marshal.

Scarpitti is accused of taking part in an arson attack that damaged three cement trucks at Ross Island Sand & Gravel in Portland on April 15, 2001. The ELF claimed responsibility for that crime.

"Terrorism is not how our political system should operate, nor should our government tolerate it," said Rep. Greg Walden.

Scarpitti gained notoriety in July 2000 when he scaled a